

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent

Annual Report 2019-20



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Message from our chair



I am honoured to continue in my role of Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent Chair with this being my seventh year in this vital position. Our local Healthwatch is here to listen to your health and care stories and share these with the people who plan, buy and provide these services.

Sadly, as we turned the corner into 2020, none of us could know the seismic changes in store for all of us. The Coronavirus crisis has had a profound effect on daily living and, in particular, has impacted health. So many people have suffered either through illness or bereavement.

Many others have faced mental health challenges because of the impact of lockdown. We all want to cheer on all the staff in the NHS and the wider care sector who have worked so tirelessly during this crisis. However, we are all aware that the future looks grim with the knowledge of growing operation waiting lists and a concern about the number of serious health conditions going undiagnosed.

Prior to the Coronavirus, the most common themes we heard about were GP services, Mental Health Services, Social Care and Hospitals and to ensure that we address your concerns and compliments we share your stories with relevant people and incorporate your priorities into our work programme.

Additionally, the move from hospital care to community care continued to be a high priority for the local health and care economy and we were constantly reminding commissioners and providers of the absolute need to ensure that patient safety and quality of care is not negatively affected during this process. Any new models of care must be discussed with the public, their views sought and incorporated into service change to ensure that the right care is provided in the right place with no gap in service provision. Furthermore, as detailed in the CQC Local System Review the skills and experience of the voluntary sector must be incorporated into future plans together with being appropriately funded.

On the subject of funding, most, if not all of you will be aware of the current financial climate and the effect of this on statutory services. The Coronavirus has now sharpened and refocussed this growing concern. As a statutory service we are not immune to cuts to our budget and therefore going forward part of our work programme will include income generation to allow us to maximise our reach and impact.

Message from our chair

It is impossible to include all the detail of our work in this report and so only the highlights are included. If you wish to discuss any aspects of our work, then please do not hesitate to contact our staff team and if after having read about our role you would like to volunteer with us please contact us to register your interest. Thank you to our Healthwatch staff and volunteers plus all who have supported and contributed to the work of Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent. I look forward to working with you in the future in these challenging times.

Lloyd Cooke

Lloyd Cooke

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent Chair



Annual Meeting 2018/2019 - David Pearson, Together We're Better Vice Chair, Simmy Akhtar, Chief Officer, and Lloyd Cooke Chair



Our priorities 2019-20

Last year more than 600 people told us about the improvements they would like to see health and social care services make in 2019-20. We carried out a Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent 2019/20 Priorities Survey which gave you an opportunity to tell us what you think our priorities should be next year. Following evaluation of all responses and feedback our 2019/20 priority areas were identified as:

» Patient experience of prescriptions

We worked in partnership with the North Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Local Pharmacy Committee (LPC). We designed a survey and the LPC distributed it at various pharmacies in the City. Our staff also attended groups in the City to promote our survey and its completion. Due to Covid-19 publication has been delayed as the LPC rightly prioritised their response to the pandemic. We will publish our findings in 2020-21.

"Community pharmacists are highly qualified health care professionals, who can provide clinical advice for common illnesses and support you to stay well. The LPC help and support community pharmacies in the local area. LPC work in collaboration and have an effective two-way relationship with many organisations, one of which is Healthwatch Stoke and Staffordshire.

Our strong relationship together allowed this piece of work to be developed and we hope that the results will inform the way forward for both pharmacies and patients."

**Dr Tania Cork, Chief Operating Officer
North Staffs & Stoke Local Pharmaceutical Committee
/ Superintendent, Miltons chemist ltd / Course tutor, Keele University / Head of Pharmacy, Stoke college**

» Patient experience of community mental health services

Our volunteer Mental Health Group led on this project and spent their time at the Greenfield Centre and the Sutherland Centre. Our final draft report was sent to North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust (NSCHT) just before Covid-19. Due to the latter NSCHT were unable to provide a response to our recommendations as their resources were rightly channelled towards dealing with the pandemic. We will work with NSCHT to ensure publication in 2020-21.



Our priorities 2019-20

» Patient experience of NHS and social care in the home

Our staff and volunteers co-designed a survey to be completed by people who have experience of NHS care and social care in the home. This includes, patients, carers, family members and workers in the sector. Following survey design our staff arranged focus groups and visits to complete targeted engagement with affected groups. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 all face to face engagement was cancelled and we were unable to complete this project.

However, we did receive some survey responses prior to the pandemic. We will ensure that findings are shared with relevant stakeholders and we will publish a short summary of feedback received on our website in 2020-21.

Our 2019/20 priorities have unavoidably been affected by Covid-19 and therefore publication of findings has been pushed forward to 2020-21. We will ensure that the voice of those who spared their valuable time with us to share their experiences is heard. We will share your concerns and compliments with relevant stakeholders together with recommendations for improvement and ask for a response to the recommendations.



About us

Here to make care better

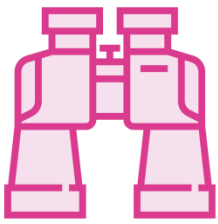
We are the independent champion for people who use health and social care services. We're here to find out what matters to people, and help make sure your views shape the support they need.

We listen to what people like about services, and what could be improved, and we share these views with those with the power to make change happen. We also help people find the information they need about services in their area.

Nationally and locally, we have the power to make sure that those in charge of services hear people's voices. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them.

I have been a volunteer representative with Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent in several different roles. Being involved in Enter & View visits and PLACE inspections enabled me to gain new experiences and meet a lot of new friends. It also meant that I could use the spare time I have in a very useful way. Thanks to Healthwatch for these opportunities and the training and guidance given to me to carry them out.





Our vision is simple

Health and care that works for you.
People want health and social care support that works – helping them to stay well, get the best out of services and manage any conditions they face.



Our purpose

To find out what matters to you and to help make sure your views shape the support you need.



Our approach

People's views come first – especially those that find it hardest to be heard.
We champion what matters to you and work with others to find solutions. We are independent and committed to making the biggest difference to you.



How we find out what matters to you

People are at the heart of everything we do. Our staff and volunteers identify what matters most to people by:

- Visiting services to see how they work
- Running surveys and focus groups
- Going out in the community and working with other organisations



Find out more about us and the work we do

Website: www.healthwatchstoke.co.uk

Twitter: @healthwatchsot

Facebook: @healthwatchstoke

Instagram: @healthwatchstoke

Highlights from our year

Find out about our resources and the way we have engaged and supported more people in 2019-20. Our resources:



Health and care that works for you



18 volunteers

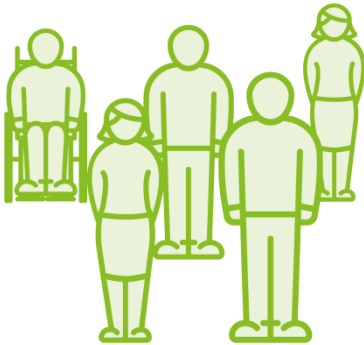
helping to carry out our work. In total, they gave up 219 number of hours.

We employed
4 staff
50% of whom are full time equivalent.

We received
£183,425 in funding

from our local authority in 2019-20.

Supporting people



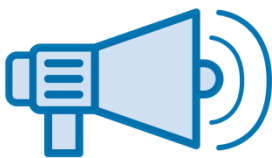
548 People

shared their health and social care story with us.

2048 people

accessed Healthwatch advice and information online, contacted us with questions about local support or engaged through a community event.

Reaching out



15779 website page views, 16% more than last year.

2389 social media followers, 19% more than last year.

We attended 74 community events which engaged 1685 people.

Making a difference to care



We published

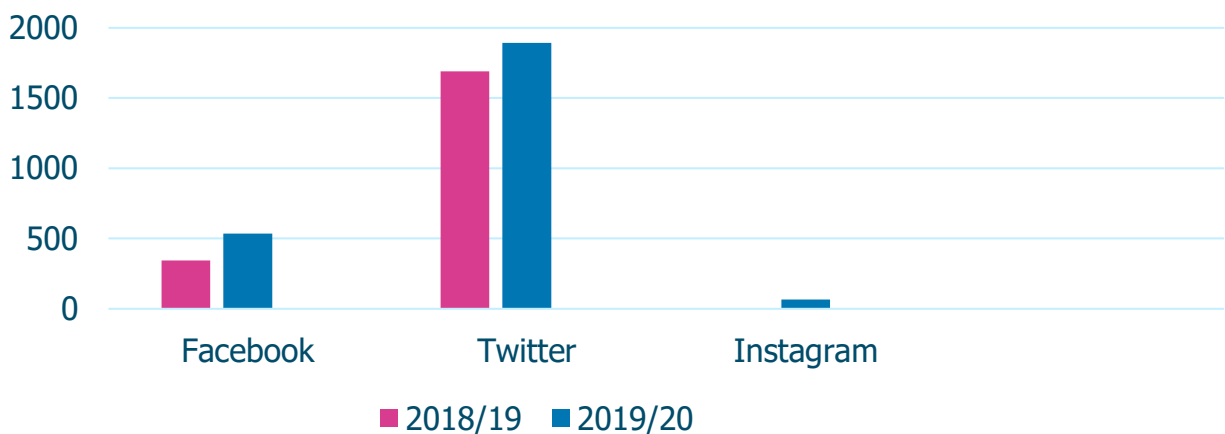
25 reports

about the improvements people would like to see with their health and social care, and from this, we made 56 recommendations for improvement.

Social media: post and present

Throughout the year, each of our social media channels have played a significant role in our capacity to reach out, engage, inform and build alliances with other organisations. Subsequently, our social media channels continue to grow and evolve by the day. Our Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages have seen a growing number of followers and engagements.

Social media followers 2018/19 Vs 2019/20



This year we have had an increase of 193 new Facebook followers, 122 new Twitter followers and 67 new Instagram followers. All our posts and tweets have increased per month, which has resulted in a higher audience engagement percentage. For example, in the month of July 2019 our Twitter page significantly engaged with a range of organisations and individuals through new followers, additional tweets and mentions and increased impressions.

Jul 2019 • 31 days

TWEET HIGHLIGHTS

Top Tweet earned 721 impressions

This is the final opportunity for you to have your say at this event at Stoke town hall.

healthwatchstokeontrent.co.uk/news/stop-the-...

1

View Tweet activity

View all Tweet activity

Top mention earned 4 engagements

Staffscogs
 @StaffsCCGs · Jul 30

At today's Stoke and North Staffs AGM in Common we have been joined by local representatives from our third sector stakeholders, such as [@healthwatchstoke](#) [@DiabetesUK](#) [@NorthStaffsMind](#) [@MacmillanStaffs](#) [@ActionOnHearing](#) [#StaffsAGM2019](#)

JUL 2019 SUMMARY

Tweets: 66 Tweet impressions: 16.5K

Profile visits: 292 Mentions: 12

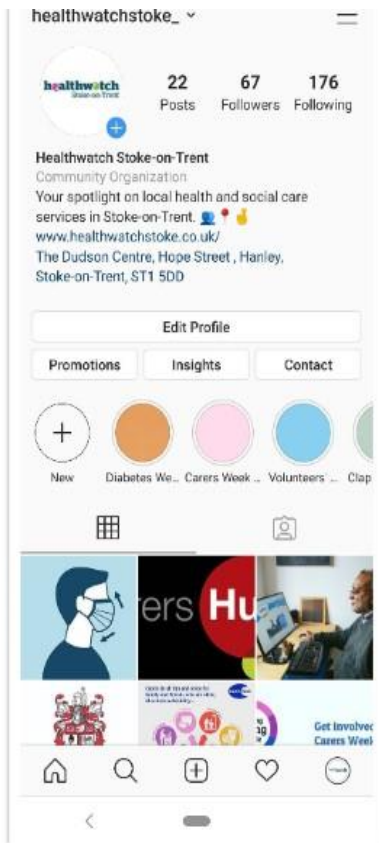
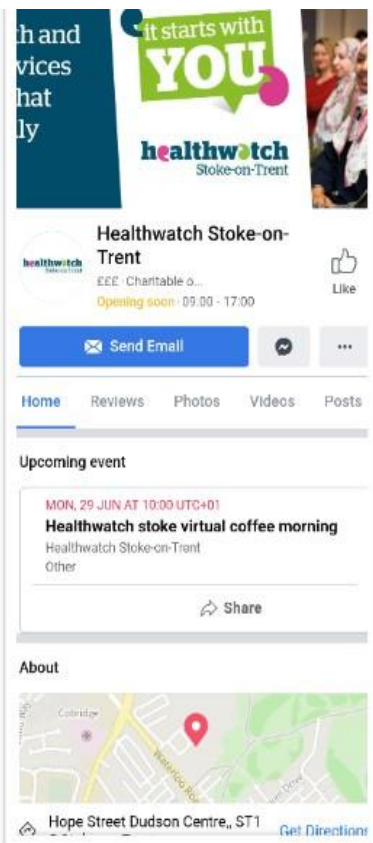
New followers: 15

Social media and virtual opportunities

Over the previous few months with the expansion of the coronavirus pandemic our social media channels have been fundamental in being able to function and continue our work in offering guidance and signposting services. This has largely been down to exploring and joining new Facebook groups and Twitter and Instagram pages. Through each of our groups and pages we have been able to monitor and distribute important and ever-changing health and social care news, whilst informing our audience of upcoming community events and meals.

In addition, we have been able to interact with our volunteers, promote outreach activities such as virtual afternoon teas, which has enabled us to continue to listen to public experiences of health and social care. As a result of this new way of working, we have exploited and improved our audience engagement with greater effect.

Looking forward into the future, we will continue where possible, with virtual interactivity across our social media platforms and we will be persistent on growing our follower base to ensure that we can effectively keep our audience informed of health and social care news. We also aspire to create a YouTube channel to increase our ability to reach wider and diverse audiences.



How we've made a difference



Public Experience of Pregnancy and Maternity Services

Pregnancy and maternity is one of the nine protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010. We identified a gap in pregnancy and maternity feedback from pregnant ladies, mothers, and their family members.

We asked three questions from 24 September 2019 to 9 December 2019. The questions were:

- What was good about your experience?
- What could have been better?
- What could be improved?

These questions were published on our website, Twitter, Facebook and in our quarterly newsletter

We also attended four local organisations in a variety of areas and engaged with 129 people.

Date	Attended	Number of people engaged
07/10/2019	Treehouse Children's Centre Bentilee	15
10/10/2019	Bouncing Bears group Hanley library	27
15/10/2019	Treehouse Children's Centre Bentilee	20
18/10/2019	Singing Bears group Hanley Library	30
28/10/2019	Family fun day Hope Community church Hanley	17
06/12/2019	Alice Charity Big Cup Bradwell	20
Total		129

"People told us "that they do not feel listened to by health services".

"I struggled with breastfeeding and received no help - I was then told off for not bringing in my own milk when on day three I tried formula"



"When I was pregnant, I went MAU at the Royal Stoke hospital on 3 separate occasions with reduced movement and I felt palmed off as I was sent home on all occasions. On the 4th visit I saw the consultant who induced me, and I dread to think if he wasn't on shift that day that they would have sent me home again and I would not have my baby."

Our main recommendations included:

- **Review the process for dealing with reduced foetal movements to ensure individuals are listened to and supported**
- **Work with the Local Authorities to redesign a breastfeeding support service which supports new mothers to breastfeed**
- **Review workforce levels and ensure that staffing is adequate, meets national guidelines and patient safety and quality of care is not compromised**
- **Provide all new mothers and their families with selfcare information and relevant contact details before discharge**
- **Review the ward processes for care of mothers who have had a c-section to ensure that the right level of support is provided to mother and baby**
- **Provide gestational diabetes training to all relevant staff**
- **Dignity and respect should be shown to all patients**

Read the full report at: <https://www.healthwatchstokeontrent.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Final-HWSOT-Pregnancy-and-Maternity-report-Feb2020.pdf>

The report was sent to University Hospital North Midlands and presented at the Maternity Transformation Programme Board, a workstream of the STP. Due to Covid-19 this will be followed up later in the year

North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Eating Disorder open day

As part of eating disorder awareness week 2-8 March 2020 we had a stall at North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust open day to give patients a voice on local health and social care services.

We engaged with 64 people in total who have or had experienced a service relating to eating disorders and the remainder were health professionals from the same organisation and other community organisations.



"There should be support in place for adults with eating disorders"

"I am 18 and feel like I don't matter"

"As staff we would like to be trained to be able to support people who have eating disorders "as we don't know how to support the women correctly and what terminology is best."

Samantha Mortimer, Associate Director for North Staffordshire Locality

"Combined Healthcare Trust has recognised the gap in service provision for the delivery of an adult Eating Disorder service and as such has developed a business case to support the commissioning of a new service, this is in progress with our commissioners"

Beth Johnson Foundation, Healthy Generation Project

We were asked by the organisation to work collaboratively together and deliver a basic digital IT session about Healthwatch and how to use our website for people aged 50 and over.

It is important that people are aware what digital services are available relating to health and social care and how to access these services locally.

In total we delivered four digital sessions for the organisation and the rest were put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic.

FREE EVENTS
But... booking is essential!



Beth Johnson
FOUNDATION



BASIC DIGITAL SKILLS
COMMUNITY WORKSHOP
FOR PEOPLE AGED 50+

The Beth Johnson Foundation are delighted to offer people aged 50+ living in Stoke-on-Trent a free workshop on basic digital skills.

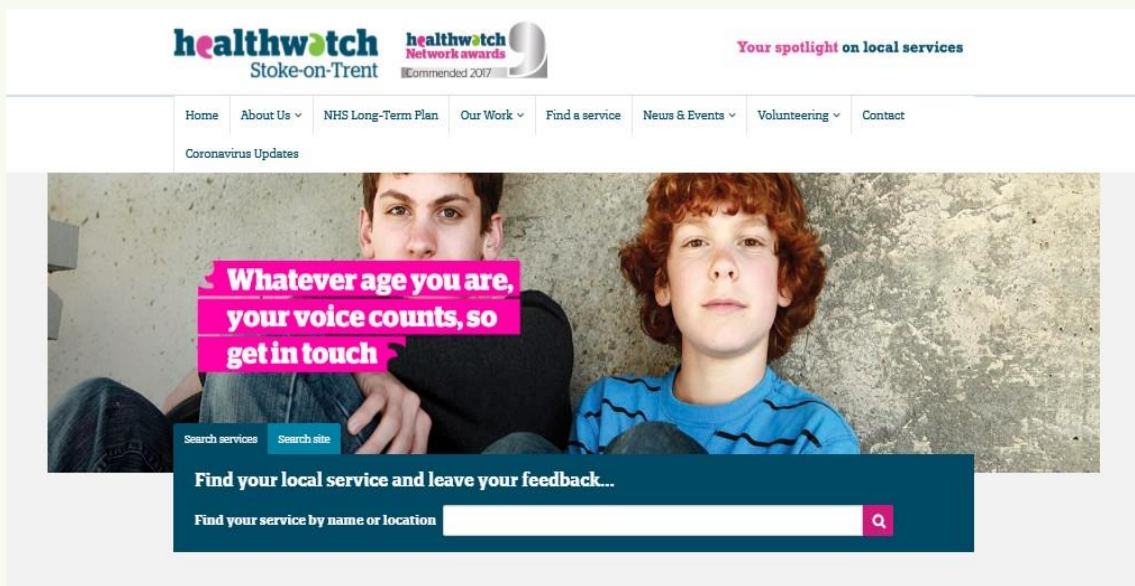
Whether it is learning how to use a tablet or laptop, ordering shopping online or making sure your photos are accessible, we are here to help!

Places are limited so book early!
Ring to book a place on 01782 844036

When: Tuesday 19th November
Time: 10 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.
Where: Hollybush Enterprise Centre
77 Meaford Drive, Blurton, Stoke-on-Trent
ST3 2BB

☎ 01782 844036
✉ healthygenerations@bjf.org.uk





“The website is marvellous, I didn’t know there was so many services that I can use if I need to”

“Gives you more confidence in accessing information”.



Laura the Community Outreach Lead became the 3,000th person to complete 1000 Lives training with ALL THE SMALL THINGS, the local Social Action Hub.

1000 Lives brings people, skills, resources, opportunities and enthusiasm in the city together to make it a better place to live for everyone

The benefit of the training to Laura was “using a community organising approach to help people listen, be powerful and take action”. This is also important within the role of Healthwatch as we build relationships locally and nationally and understand the experiences of people who are using health and social care services by giving people an opportunity to speak up and have their voices heard.

Laura has adapted the community organising approach to include in her role as Community Outreach Lead and this can be seen below.





Prior to joining Healthwatch, Laura spent time volunteering as a befriender for CareLink through the organisation Saltbox. CareLink provides telephone befriending to support people over 65 in Stoke-on-Trent who are struggling with the effects of loneliness and isolation, to keep them healthy and independent in their own homes for as long as possible.

Read the full blog article at: <https://saltbox.org.uk/carelink/carelink-volunteer-stories-laura/>

Laura has kept in contact with the organisation and has been working collaboratively with CareLink by attending their *chatty cafe's* in a variety of different locations in Stoke-on-Trent, to build a relationship with the people using the services so that they are aware of what Healthwatch does and that their feedback is so important.



“I wish I used the organisation when my partner was in a nursing home”

“Laura supported me by giving me the name of an organisation for support”

Enter and View - looking at local services



Enter and View

This year we undertook Enter and View visits to twenty-two premises, including eight Care Homes and Nursing Homes, four GP surgeries, three Wards at Royal Stoke University Hospital, the Haywood Hospital and five facilities at Harplands Hospital. We were also one of the first local Healthwatch in England to undertake an Enter and View visit to a pharmacy.

All our visits were undertaken either as part of our planned schedule of visits to examine local health and care services or, equally importantly, as a result of anonymised information from the public, expressing a concern regarding aspects of health and care either experienced by themselves, or by a family member or friend.

Each visit is undertaken by a group of two-three volunteers, each of whom has undertaken full training regarding how to carry out an Enter and View visit as well as having a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate. Because we want our volunteers to be fully confident when on a visit, we also arrange for them to receive Safeguarding training and a wide range of other e-learning. Often, they are accompanied by a member of our staff team, who can provide guidance should it be needed, as well as ensuring the visit is conducted appropriately. Following every visit, a report is produced first as a draft which is then reviewed by the manager of the relevant facility to allow them to question the contents for accuracy.

A final version of the report is produced which is then approved by our Healthwatch Advisory Board (HAB) and, finally, the report is sent to CQC, to Healthwatch England, as well as to our local CCG and (in the case of care homes) to City of Stoke-on-Trent Council.

Each report lists (where appropriate) recommendations which our team believe would improve the service provided by the facility. So far, we have always been welcomed by the managers and their staff, as we are viewed as 'critical friends', offering advice wherever possible. During last year, across the twenty-two visits, we made a total of thirty-six recommendations, we re-visited two premises to check how recommendations had been implemented and received four 'letters of thanks' from the managers of the facilities.



I am writing in response to the report following the Enter and view visit on December 9th, 2019. Firstly, thank you to you and your team for a positive visit and I hope that you had suitable assurance.

Following our visit to the Maternity Unit at Royal Stoke University Hospital, we were pleased to receive a detailed action plan prepared by senior staff. We received lots of feedback about the Maternity Assessment Unit (MAU) and so we arranged an Enter and View visit to specifically look at this area.

It is worth pointing out that we never tell the organisation we are visiting the date or time of our visit - we only inform them that we are going to visit 'at some point'. Our visit to the MAU coincided with the first day of a new Matron on duty, yet the visit was excellent – staff were helpful, the facility was well organised and our questions were answered satisfactorily. Recommendations were made, but these were mainly to improve the office accommodation for the maternity staff who worked on the Unit.

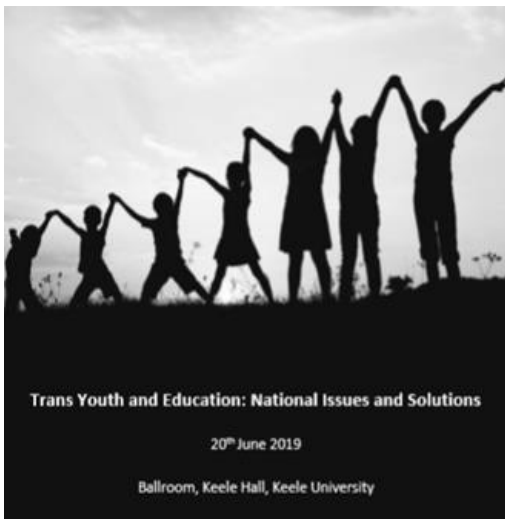
Many of our recommendations are small and inexpensive to implement, but the aim is to always seek to improve the experience of the patient and the family of the patient. One very timely example - at the time of writing, we are still gripped by the Covid-19 crisis and there is a huge emphasis on washing hands and use of hand sanitisers. No fewer than three of our published reports last year report the fact that our visitors found hand sanitisers to be either missing or empty. Regular replenishment of the contents is not expensive but is something which is vitally important. Two care homes and a hospital ward were found to be lacking at the time of the visit.

In this concluding part, it is worth mentioning one significant impact following a recommendation made. We undertook a visit to the recently opened (October 2019) Crisis Centre at Harplands Hospital. This Unit has been set up to provide a consolidated service for young people and adults who wish to access the support provided as part of crisis care. As well as providing treatment rooms and a significant level of telephone support, the unit also provides a Place of Safety, a quiet room where patients are normally brought by members of Staffordshire Police. Our main recommendation was the fact that only one entrance meant that younger people would be in close proximity to potentially more troubled adults and this shortcoming meant that a second, discrete entrance would be required. We have been assured that this second entrance is being undertaken and we plan to re-visit the facility once we are able to do so.

We believe we undertake a valuable and independent service, constantly seeking to improve care for the citizens of Stoke-on-Trent, giving them a voice which we ensure is heard. If you feel inspired to help us in this work, please contact us, initially with an email to: info@stokeontrenthealthwatch.co.uk telling us a little bit about yourself.



Working with the transgender community



Working with the transgender community

Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent has worked with the Transgender community over recent years and this work culminated in a conference held at Keele University in June 2019, attended by more than 100 delegates featuring respected keynote presenters, including speakers from Goldsmiths, University of London and Mermaids, the national transgender support group for younger people.

An extract from the published Keele University event report reads: "The event was well-received, as evidenced by the attendee responses on the feedback form. 94% of respondents found the day to be 'relevant to them and their work' and that they would 'recommend this event to others'. 89% said that they 'learnt something new about trans education' and a further 94% said that they 'feel inspired to make a change as a result of the event'. Many attendees elaborated on their feedback by writing additional comments. Attendees were particularly pleased with the diversity of speakers and the fact that trans and non-binary individuals were involved in the event, both in organisational and speaking capacities."

The event was the culmination of work undertaken by *Newleaf*, a group set up by Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent to record issues and experiences of people around the city who possibly identify as transgender and to seek to improved health and care support for them.

"Healthwatch Stoke and I have been working closely together over many years on Trans issues, and we started this 'Drop In' service well over 18 months ago in Stoke, and it has gradually grown ever since. Any issues or concerns expressed by a Trans person who visits the 'Drop In', are noted and logged by Dave, and on occasions with their permission, their issue is escalated upward (for example - to their CCG if appropriate) in order to seek an explanation or resolution. Confidentiality is 100% and Trans people's names and stories can be anonymised for protection if need be" - quote from one of our volunteers.





"My son continues to benefit enormously from this support both from myself and Healthwatch and this is showing by his positive attitude. Your child is happy when you tell them that you have discussed with another GP who is understanding and willing to support as much as possible. Thankyou Healthwatch"

Our involvement sought to improve support in different ways – one of our volunteers is a parent of a teenager identifying as transgender. The nearest support group operated by Mermaids, was in Birmingham which necessitated a lot of travelling and further disruption to the family.

A member of Newleaf told us of the problems she encountered and, as a team, Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent considered how we might help.

From our very limited funding Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent managed to sponsor the training of our volunteer and supported the training of a further volunteer so that a local branch of Mermaids could be set up. It now operates successfully and meets fortnightly, providing the support and advice required to parents and children in a friendly environment.

And, finally, two quotes from attendees of the event in June 2019:

"Glad I went to explore issues faced by the trans community, particularly in the youth. It was a real eye opener and I'm excited to be more active in the fight for equal trans rights"

"Fantastic day learning about how best to make education trans-inclusive. We will try to embed these principles into our Medical curriculum @KeeleMedSchool."

Helping those needing services



We were contacted by an elderly person who suffers from Dystonia. The eye condition is only alleviated by regular Botox injections to the face.

Just as the Covid-19 virus was beginning to take hold, she was notified that her regular appointment at the Eye Clinic at Royal Stoke University Hospital was cancelled, meaning the lady was left with severely limited vision and in considerable pain. Her GP surgery could only prescribe an ointment.

We contacted the Eye Clinic and

explained the severe impact on the patient and eventually, we managed to secure an appointment for her.

Following treatment, she contacted us to express her thanks for taking real action to help her get the treatment she needed so much.



Long

Term

Plan

#WhatWouldYouDo

NHS Long Term Plan Views

“This is an excellent and thorough piece of work which truly gathers the views of patients across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and gives the Clinical Commissioning Groups food for thought when we use what people said to turn the NHS Long Term plan into local decision making to meet their needs.”

Dr Lorna Clarson, Clinical Chair for Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group

“The independent voice provided by Healthwatch Staffordshire and Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent is a crucial part of the Together We’re Better partnership. This very welcome report, which captures the views of local people on what they want to see change in health and care following the publication of the NHS Long Term Plan, will form a key building block in the development of our refreshed Five Year Plan, due out in the autumn. We thank Healthwatch Staffordshire and Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent for carrying out this work.”

Sir Neil McKay, Together We’re Better Chair



Our volunteers work on the NHS Long Term Plan



www.longtermplan.nhs.uk



Early in 2019, every Local Healthwatch was asked to seek local feedback to help in the development of the NHS Long Term Plan. We completed surveys with the public and held focus groups with young people and those with experience of NHS services in care homes.

Over a two-month period, our volunteers supported us with survey completion. They attended a variety of locations, including the Atrium at the Royal Stoke University Hospital (RSUH), events such as Staffordshire Police Development Day, sessions with Carers, Deafvibe, Stroke groups, meetings of BAME groups and North Staffordshire Combined Healthcare Trust events.

Our volunteers also supported us with data input which ensured that our deadline for completion was met and findings included in the Local Five-Year Plan.

To read a summary of our findings including recommendations please see:

<https://www.healthwatchstokeontrent.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/HW-Stoke-and-Staffs-NHS-LTP-Report-Summary.pdf>



Highlights



More than 40,000 people shared their views with Healthwatch



Our network held over 500 focus groups reaching different communities across England.



Healthwatch attended almost 1,000 community events, including festivals, carers cafes, shopping centres and NHS services to speak to the public about their experiences

Some feedback

Prevention / Self Care

Our respondents express a desire to be involved in their own care and repeated the need for better information provision to help them do this, such as timely communications. They are also keen to prevent ill health, with many respondents making suggestions as to how preventative services can be improved. Healthwatch is keen to see preventative services given a priority and a move away from reactionary services becoming more than an aspiration.

Communications

Many of those who responded to this survey express a desire to be partners in their own care. Through comments shared and survey responses they describe a desire to be listened to and communicated with in a way which enables this. Many are happy for this to be enabled by technology too, although this does not suit all. Technology is also suggested as a means for agencies to communicate better. Respondents want organisations to be able to adequately share information needed to keep them well, such as the sharing of test results. However, they also suggest that the management and security of data is of paramount importance to them.

Information Provision

Recent moves towards initiatives such as Social Prescribing suggest a real move towards answering some of the concerns raised by respondents about information provision. Information provision across the STP patch is piecemeal. Healthwatch is keen to see that information provision forms part of forward planning with clear ownership and leadership attached to it. It should also consider groups particularly affected by information provision, such as those with hearing loss, represented in the cohort included in this report.

Maintaining Independence

As they get older, our respondents want to be secure that their family will be helped to support them at the end of life and want to remain in their own home for as long as possible. To help them to remain independent, they want services to be accessible and transport links ample, especially in rural communities. They identify access to services such as respite, community care and help in the home as important tools in remaining well. What they say also echoes earlier work done by Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent in which over 75s explained the importance of social factors such as measures that alleviate loneliness or community action.

Those with Long-Term Conditions

Of those who answered the condition specific survey, just under a third of them said that their initial attempts to access help met their needs and quarter of them described their overall experience of getting help as positive. Half of respondents who sought support for more than one condition said this made it more difficult to access. A third of respondents described waiting times as ok and a quarter said this didn't improve much when waiting for specialist help. Many of these comments relate to mental health, an ongoing theme throughout this report. A third of patients described their access to ongoing care as ok and a quarter said that this met their expectations. Although respondents described the communication between organisations as well as between staff and patients as the main cause for their dissatisfaction; it is notable that throughout this feedback, access and communication are mentioned more than anything else.

Young People

Young people described some good experiences, such as the use of emergency services and the general care they have received. They reflected wider concerns of society, highlighting waiting times as a concern, and again communication. In this though, the nuances changed with this group. Many of the waiting comments relate to accessing mental health services with long waits described, others about getting appointments with their GP. Also highlighted is the critical importance of continuity of care in this group with many describing difficulties communicating with staff in primary care. Things are easier for young people in a clinical setting if they have a relationship with those treating them, something becoming particularly less frequent. They make useful suggestions, such as the use of Skype to alleviate the anxiety of attending primary care. However, for this group more than any they feel a difficulty in explaining mental health problems to reception staff. Healthwatch feels that although recent work done on the impact of initiatives such as Care Navigation showed that most do not mind the interaction with receptionists, there should be special recognition in training for this group if this is not already present.

Care Homes and NHS Provisions

When talking about NHS in care homes, respondents spoke positively about much of the care they receive and how hard staff work. They mention appreciating things like dentist and GP visits. They expressed concern about access issues such as to things such as physio, hearing specialists and questioned why district nurses do not go into care homes. To improve things, they suggest staff training as a top priority and more supervision of care in homes by the NHS. Respondents mention specific training to support staff in keeping residents mobile and active as well as the potential for reducing urine infections.



Recommendations

Focus on prevention including identification of priority areas based on population health together with long-term financial investment and a clear line of accountability for achieving positive change.

Health and Care services to develop a joined-up approach to communication and information provision for all members of our communities so that they are enabled to keep themselves well whilst taking account of Data Protection legislation.

Community assets that alleviate loneliness should be recognised as integral. This includes engaging the third sector in a meaningful way and accepting that financial investment is needed in the third sector if a gap cannot be met by health and care services.

Carers should be supported to fulfil their role and services such as respite given higher priority.

Access to mental health should be improved and recognition of possible mental health conditions be considered when diagnosing conditions.

The use of technology in healthcare should be a choice, addressing the needs of patients who may not be comfortable with it but maximising opportunity for those that are.

Easier access to test results and information where appropriate so that patients can become active participants in their care.

Improved communication between services and move towards an integrated, digital system.

GP reception staff should be trained to communicate with young people and other vulnerable groups to enable them to feel more confident to engage. This should form part of Care Navigation training where delivered.

Every effort should be made to ensure continuity of care in all settings, especially with at-risk groups and young people for whom the building of a relationship is important.

The NHS' comprehensive service should extend to residential care and care homes, providing simple access to services such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dentists and district nursing, hearing specialists and others.

Staff training in care homes should be key priority for the NHS as well as increased supervision of establishments where required.

Transport should be understood as a key determinant of health, especially in rural communities. It should be at the heart of planning beyond the placement of health and care services and done so jointly.



Helping you find the answers



Finding the right service can be worrying and stressful. Healthwatch plays an important role in helping people to get the information they need to take control of their health and care and find services that will provide them with the right support.

This year we helped over 2000 people get the advice and information they need by:

- Providing advice and information articles on our website.
- Answering people's queries about services over the phone, by email, or online.
- Talking to people at community events.
- Promoting services and information that can help people on our social media.

Here are some of the areas that people asked about.

(1) Primary care - GP

A lady emailed us for advice on making a complaint about her sisters GP.

"My complaint is on behalf of my sister. I was supposed to pick up a consent form from her GP to access her medical records which my sister had agreed to but she has since been placed in an induced coma and is in critical care at Royal Stoke.

I contacted PALS about two maybe three weeks ago but they haven't got back to me. First and foremost our complaint is with the GP but also includes the frailty team, the ambulance service, social services and occupational therapy. Can you help me sift through red tape/jargon etc; at the moment my mind is occupied with my sister and am finding it hard to articulate concisely in order not to be pushed around/bullied into arguments with all the above. I do have one recording of an OT apologising to my sister for what amounts a severe lack of both empathy and professionalism."

We advised the lady about the NHS Complaints procedure and signposted her to Assist Advocacy Services. She expressed her gratefulness for our prompt response.



(2) Secondary care - Hospital

A lady phoned saying that her "husband has Parkinson's and that he is on a ward at the Royal Stoke University Hospital. He was admitted for a biopsy and was informed that it would take place the next day however it was two weeks before he had it done and he is still in there due to not arranging his care plan. The lady asked if we could help in pointing her in the right direction on who to ring to complain".

The lady was signposted to Patient Advice and Liaison Service at the hospital and provided details for Asist Advocacy Services.



(3) Pregnancy/maternity

A lady rang the office phone as she has recently moved into the area and would like to know if there are any local groups she could attend with her 8 month old baby boy.

We signposted the lady to various local organisations and she found this helpful in meeting people in similar situations to herself.



Volunteers



At Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent we are supported by our invaluable volunteers to help us find out what people think is working, and what people would like to improve to services in their communities.

Our volunteers

Our volunteers have worked with us to achieve some outstanding results. For example, in 2019-20, several volunteers attended strategic meetings, helped us with attendance at various events, worked to get local, regional and national surveys completed, and also took part in our schedule of Enter and View visits.

"I have been volunteering for Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent since it started. I used to work for a Mental Health Charity and chaired Healthwatch's Mental Health Group meetings. When I retired just over 2 years ago, I had more time to spare and so was able to do more volunteering. I have visited care homes, hospital wards and GP surgeries as well as taking part in community events. I have been very well supported by all the staff team at Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent and all the volunteers support each other - we are like a family without this support I wouldn't be able to do the volunteering."

Hilda, Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent volunteer

We will continue to look to our wonderful volunteers for their support for Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent to be able to continue its work and present issues and concerns raised by members of the public to relevant professional bodies. If you think you might like to help us, please see below for our contact details.



Volunteer with us

If you are interested in our volunteering opportunities and have 2 – 3 hours to spare each month, please get in touch. Volunteering with Healthwatch Stoke will help us and could also help you.

w: www.healthwatchstoke.co.uk

t: 01782 683080

e: info@healthwatchstoke.co.uk

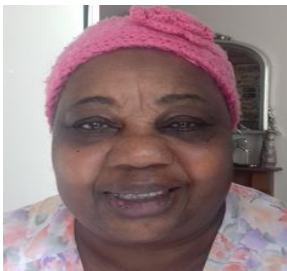
Our volunteers

Some of our fantastic volunteers



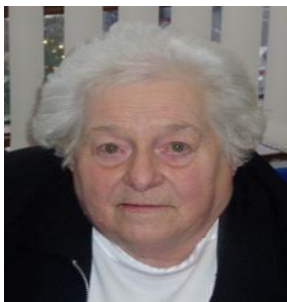
Hilda

At one time, Hilda was a local councillor, who also worked at the much-missed North Staffs User Group. Hilda is now the Chair of the Healthwatch Volunteers Group and also sits on our Mental Health Group. She has a particular interest in mental health and has undertaken many of our Enter and View visits as well as assisting at a wide range of events.



Ruby

Ruby is a well travelled, retired health service professional, with a family spread across the globe. Since retiring, she has become an active, contributing member of our volunteer team and can always be relied upon to give a considered and experienced opinion.



Jean

Jean is a well-known member of the community around Bentilee. Many years ago, Jean established the first 'mums' group in the area and was, until recently, an active member of Bentilee volunteers. She gave her time to the LINK, which preceded Healthwatch and continues to volunteer as a respected member of our Enter and View team.



Paul

Before volunteering with Healthwatch Stoke-on-Trent, Paul worked for many years as a Senior Nurse with our local Mental Health Trust. His expert knowledge has proved invaluable when we meet professional staff from local organisations as part of our scheduled Enter and View visits.

His expertise is also valued by our local CCG.

Celebrate volunteering

As a thank you to all our volunteers we had a joint party to celebrate international volunteer day and our Christmas party on the same day.

Each volunteer received a certificate and some chocolate as an appreciation of everything they have done throughout the last year.



Our plans for next year



Message from our Chief Officer

Looking back

This year has been an eventful and busy year. It will no doubt be remembered as the year where Covid-19 has impacted each of us in one way or another. We will also remember how communities and professionals pulled together at pace to support each other and ensure that health and social care services are mobilised. Those who lost their lives to this awful disease will forever be in our thoughts.

We have detailed our progress on our priorities earlier in this report. We have also detailed our work on the NHS Long-Term Plan, the findings of which have been incorporated into the Local Five-Year Plan

(<https://www.twbstaffsandstoke.org.uk/about-us/nhs-long-term-plan>).

We have made robust recommendations following our pregnancy and maternity services work and we will follow-up progress on our recommendations later this year and next year. In all cases where we have made recommendations and shared your experiences we will push for positive change.

Looking Ahead

Prior to Covid-19 and in February 2020 our Healthwatch Advisory Board agreed the following 2020/21 priorities based on feedback and intelligence from our residents:

- Autism pathway for children and adults including transition.
- Primary Care Access and public experience of the pathway
- Prioritise our outreach and engagement with seldom-heard groups

As an organisation that champions the public voice on health and social care we need to adapt to our priorities in response to what is happening in this sector. Therefore, next year

we will work with Together We're Better, Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council to develop and distribute a Covid-19 survey. This survey will gather your experience of the effect of the pandemic on health and care services together with gathering learning about what worked well and what did not work well.

We will only complete targeted work on the priorities agreed in February 2020 if we have capacity to do so as we will prioritise reactive work which will be required in response to this global pandemic.

Throughout the year we will also carry-out 'call-outs for evidence' based on local and Healthwatch England intelligence. This will provide us with an opportunity to respond to issues as they arise.

We will also work with Healthwatch England on national priorities to ensure that our local communities experiences are shared with central government.

Thank you

I would like to thank our staff, Healthwatch Advisory Board and fantastic volunteers for all their contributions in championing the public voice in health and social care. It is a collective effort and we can only do this if you spare your invaluable time sharing your experiences. Thank you to everyone for your input, dedication and support and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Simmy Akhtar

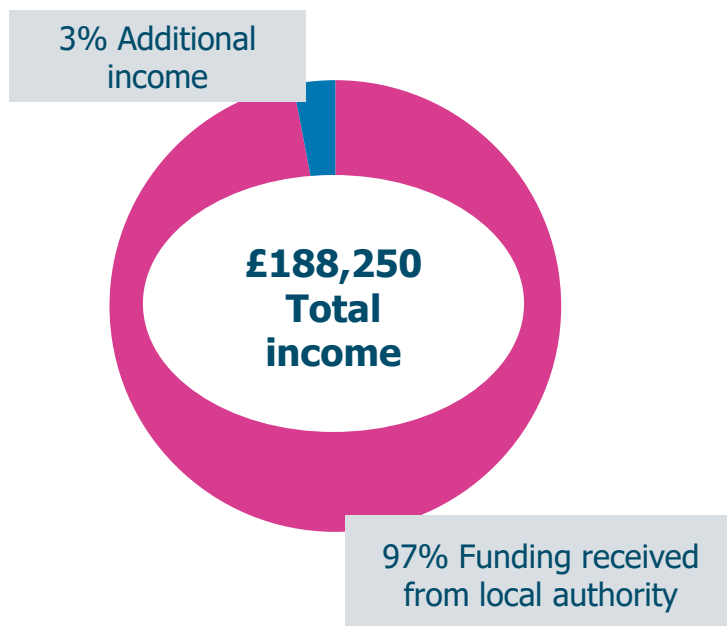
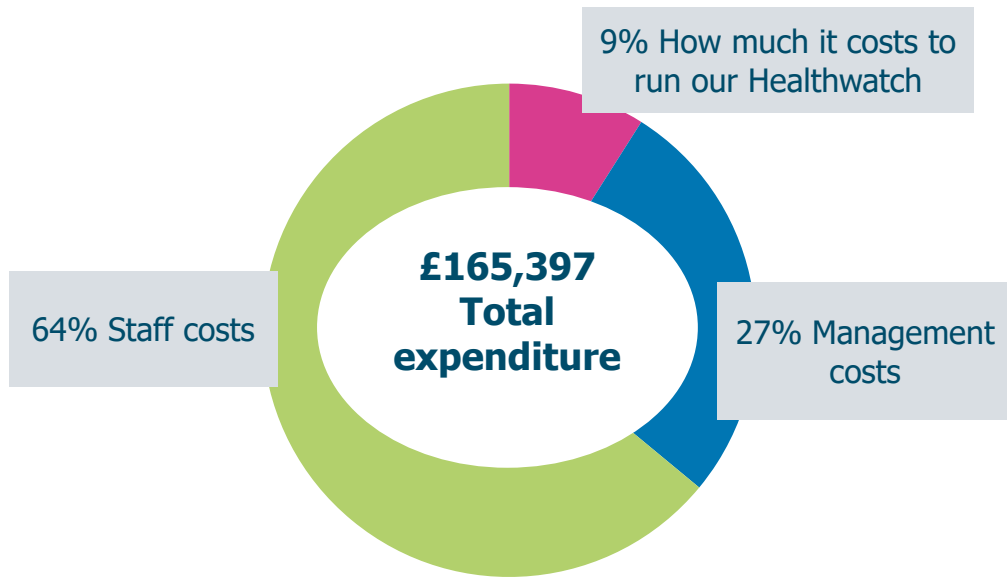
**Chief Officer,
Healthwatch
Stoke-on-Trent**



Finances



We are funded by our local authority under the Health and Social Care Act (2012). In 2019-20 we spent £165,397 and we received £188,250.



Thank you

Thank you to everyone that is helping us put people at the heart of social care, including:

- » Members of the public who shared their views and experience with us.
- » All of our amazing staff and volunteers.
- » The voluntary organisations that have contributed to our work.
- » All stakeholders who have supported our work.



Contact us

Address and contact as of as of 31/03/2020.

- » Contact number: 01782 683080
- » Email address: info@healthwatchstoke.co.uk
- » Twitter: @healthwatchsot
- » Facebook: @healthwatchstoke
- » Instagram: @healthwatchstoke
- » Website: www.healthwatchstoke.co.uk

Address and contact details of the organisation holding the local Healthwatch contract as of 31/03/2020.

- » Contact number: 01785 887809
- » Email address: contactus@weareecs.co.uk

We confirm that we are using the Healthwatch Trademark (which covers the logo and Healthwatch brand) when undertaking work on our statutory activities as covered by the licence agreement.

If you need this in an alternative format please contact us.

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